ised compost units and training of farmers.

Examination of Annual Reports of Undertakings

1726. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the names of public sector undertakings, which are coming under the administrative control of the Ministry of Agriculture;

(b) whether the Ministry examines in details the annual reports of such undertakings and the audit reports and the comments of the auditors; and

(c) if so, what are the serious audit objections in the undertakings reports and what actions were taken by the Government in the reports for 1995-96 and 1996-97?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) There are two Public Sector Undertakings under the Administrative control of the Ministry of Agriculture, viz. National Seeds Corporation and State Farms Corporation of India.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) No serious audit objections were observed in the reports of National Seeds Corporation and State Farms Corporation of India for the financial years 1995-96 and 1996-97. Hence, question does not arise.

National Centre for Crop Forecast

1727. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to set up a National Centre for crop forecast in the country and if so, the details thereof;

(b) where this Centre is proposed to be set up; and

(c) how the Centre will help in stabilizing the prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government has set up the National Crop Forecasting Centre (NCFC) in the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen the process of decision making and management of agriculture sector. The NCFC has started functioning with effect from 3.12.98 with a small professional team, carved out of existing resources of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation. To begin with the focus of tracking the crop prospects is prioritised to thirteen major crops viz. Rice, Wheat, Maize, Bajra, Tur Gram, Groundnut, Rapeseed & Mustard, Soyabean, Sugarcane, Cotton, Potato and Onion.

The mandate for NCFC is to provide effective and unified institutional framework for the entire crop forecasting system involving data flow from different sources and its assimilation and analysis using state-of-the-art methods and techniques.

(c) The advance information on likely crop prospects would help the Government to take stock of emerging scenario of supply and availability of agricultural commodities. This in turn would facilitate decisions regarding export, import, market intervention etc. with a view to impart price stability, particularly of essential commodities.

Cashew Cultivation

1728. SHRI J CHITHARANJAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had any schemes to help the cashew cultivation to cut down old and low yielding cashew trees and replant; and

(b) if so, what are the details of such schemes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) A Centrally sponsored scheme for integrated development of cashew is being implemented during 1998-99, with an outlay of Rs. 20.00 crores, under which a total assistance @ Rs. 9,100/- per hectare is provided for cutting down old, senile and uneconomical cashew trees and replanting with clones of high yielding varieties. Rs. 2100/- per hectare is provided in three instalments to meet the loss caused by cutting down the trees and Rs. 7,000/- per hectare for replanting/rejuvenation over a period of 5 years for productivity improvement. Under the scheme, an area of 43948 hectare has been replanted during the period 1994-95 to 1997-98 in various States.

Increased Production in Coarse Cereal Cultivation

1729. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to news-item in the Economic Times dated February 22, 1999 captioned "Call to up area under coarse cereal cultivation"

(b) whether it is a fact that there would be vast benefits to the soil if rotation of crops is practised more vigorously;

(c) if so, whether farmers would get any price incentives to switch to coarse grains and fodder crops;

(d) if not, how does Government propose to make it worthwhile for farmers to grow fodder crops and coarse grains;

(e) whether any suggestions have been sought from State Governments; and

(f) reaction of different States to more emphasis on coarse grains and fodder?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) The Government of India announces each season the Minimum Support Price for major agricultural commodities including coarse grains. The Minimum Support Price fixed by the Government covers not only cost of production but also a reasonable margin of profit as an incentive to improve the production and productivity. Fodder crops are not covered under Minimum Support Price, however, growing of fodder crops is found to be remunerative to the farmers rearing animals for marketing animal produce.

The Government of India is already implementing Centrally Sponsored Schemes for increasing production and productivity of coarse grains and fodder crops. Under the schemes assistance is provided for the transfer of technology through demonstrations and farmers trainings as well as supply of critical inputs.

(e) and (f) The various schemes are formulated in consultations with State Governments.

Cultivation of Hybrid Rice

1730. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to diversify the cultivation of hybrid rice in the country;

(b) whether the United National Development Programmes (UNDP) grants are likely to be obtained for growing hybrid rice;

(c) if so, the States selected for growing such hybrid rice during Ninth Plan;

(d) the amount proposed to be spent under the programme in every State; and

(e) the specific proposal mooted by Government to increase rice production in Ninth Plan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir, UNDP under its "Programme for Food Security" is providing